

Grave answers seen in lofty cemetery

How many times have you said "I don't want to know?"

Most of the time, I suspect, that means you are avoiding bad or disagreeable news, or are trying to avoid becoming involved in some situation you'd rather stay out of.

There is another meaning, of course, with a somewhat more subtle thought behind it — if you don't tell me, I can retain my innocence, my lack of knowledge. Aren't there times when we all choose to be innocent?

I am often torn between a desire to know all about something, and a need to preserve it in mind in a very pure state. It happens to me frequently. Most recently, during a walk up in the Blue Mountains.

DAN WENGER, from Shartlesville, extended a very kind invitation to a couple of us to go hiking with him along a portion of the Appalachian Trail out in Lebanon County.

Dan has a great love for that part of the world, and spends a good deal of time with his family at a cabin out there. During the spring and summer, it is a place for family fun and relaxation, and, during the autumn and winter, they use it as a base for hunting and snowmobiling.

So Dan, Tony Grimm, and I stole some time from our employers (in Dan's case that meant from himself) and Dan drove us out to the cabin.

After an hour or so of walking up and over a ridge, we came into a low area called, I think, Rausch Gap. And there, Dan showed us an old cemetery in which there were standing three old grave stones. I read the names on the stones, borrowed a pencil from Dan, and a piece of paper from Tony, and wrote down the names and dates.

JOHN PROUD, born in England, died at age 39 in Gold Mine Gap in the spring of 1854. Andrew Allen, also born in England, died at age 54 in Gold Mine Gap in the summer of 1854.

Catherine B. died aged one year and a few months, in the same month as Andrew Allen. Gold Mine Gap is about four miles from the cemetery. And that is all I know about those three souls.

I came back from that trip thinking that I wanted to know all about these three people. Dan said that he thought that there had been an article in the paper about them not too long ago.

Out and Around

By Dennis G. Collins
Executive Director
Berks County
Conservancy



Undoubtedly, the local historians in Lebanon County could provide some information. I told a few people what we had seen, and they seemed to have vague recollections of hearing about the cemetery, but not much more.

Then it came to me. I don't want to know. We were there on a soft fall day, not much sun, and with a hint of mist over the ground as we walked. Near the cemetery, there were many ruined buildings, indicating a settlement there had been fairly prosperous at one time.

COAL WAS the reason, I'm sure, as the evidence was all around us. We speculated as to why the village failed, and I might go and look that up someday, but I am putting it off because I really don't want to know about John Proud, Andrew Allen, and Catherine B.

It was a perfect occasion that can only be diminished by more knowledge. It might turn out that John Proud was a horse thief, a drunk, or rakehell of the worst kind. I don't care.

Where he is now is where he belongs, and I don't want it spoiled by knowing any more than I do now. Perhaps, he was a hero of the finest sort. I don't even want to know that.

I just want John Proud to lie there fixed forever in that time and place in which I first heard of him. The same for Andrew Allen and Catherine B.

Aren't there many times when we choose to preserve our innocence simply because we are contented and don't want that contentment disturbed?

We need to know a great many things to get along in this world, and we must take the responsibility of finding out many things we don't know so that we can function in society, but I think we should always have the luxury of saying "I don't want to know."